

DPH Announces First Flu-Related Death of 2020-2021 Season

DOVER (Dec. 30, 2020) – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is reminding Delawareans that as we continue to deal with COVID-19 infections, influenza is still with us as well. Sadly, DPH announces the first flu-related death of the 2020-2021 season. A 56-year-old Kent county male infected with influenza B, who also had underlying health conditions, passed away last week.

As of Dec. 19, 2020, the most recent date for which flu statistics are available, there have been five laboratory-confirmed cases of the flu in Delaware for the current season. Two cases each are to residents of Kent and New Castle counties, and one resident is from Sussex County. This number reflects only the number of lab-confirmed cases; the actual number of cases circulating statewide is likely much higher as not all people with the flu seek treatment, and many cases are diagnosed through rapid test kits in a provider's office versus a lab.

"This tragedy reminds us that while we are diligently fighting COVID-19, we cannot forget about influenza as it also can be extremely dangerous and deadly, particularly to individuals who already have weakened immune systems," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "We are keeping this person's family in our thoughts as well as everyone battling illness in this difficult time. We encourage Delawareans to get their flu vaccines if they have not done so already and to make sure everyone in their family gets theirs, too. The vaccine will lessen your likelihood of getting the flu and can lower the severity of your symptoms if you catch it. You should also take antiviral medicines if your primary care provider

prescribes them.”

In addition to getting a flu vaccine and taking antiviral medication as directed, DPH recommends that you:

- Stay home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Practice social distancing to reduce your chance of catching the flu from someone else.
- Wear a face covering if you have to go out in public to a doctor’s appointment or pharmacy.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and dispose of tissues immediately; if no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow.

Additionally, those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school, and other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with a temperature less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C) without the use of fever-reducing medications – for at least 24 hours. They should avoid close contact with well people in the household and stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your primary care provider as he or she may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical conditions.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. People with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes and asthma are more susceptible to catching the flu.

Flu vaccines are still available at many pharmacies and grocery stores, and through primary care physicians and some specialists. To find participating stores, enter your ZIP code in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's flu vaccine finder at www.cdc.gov/flu/. Flu shots continue to be available at DPH clinics located within the Department of Health and Social Services' State Service Centers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all State Service Centers are requiring appointments for flu vaccines:

- Porter State Service Center, 509 W. Eighth St., Wilmington. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 302-515-3174 to schedule an appointment.
- Hudson State Service Center, 501 Ogletown Road, Newark. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 302-283-7570 to schedule an appointment.
- Williams State Service Center, 805 River Road, Dover. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 302-857-5140 to schedule an appointment.
- Milford State Service Center – Riverwalk, 253 N.E. Front St., Milford. For ages 9 years and older. Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 302-424-7130 to schedule an appointment.
- Anna C. Shipley State Service Center, 350 Virginia Ave., Seaford. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 302-628-6772 to schedule an appointment.
- Adams State Service Center, 544 S. Bedford St., Georgetown. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call

302-515-3174 to schedule an appointment. For more information about the flu, visit flu.delaware.gov or call DPH at 1-800-282-8672.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.